

Abstract

The topic of my thesis is Assistance to victims of crime. I have chosen this topic for its importance in our era full of violence and crime. It is an issue interesting not only for lawyers but for many other different professions and public in general. My goal was to lay out as much information as possible and talk about some problematic spots regarding the rights of victims and their position not only in the criminal procedure.

The first part of my thesis is focused on brief explanation of the history and development of the relatively young science – victimology and basic terms used in victimology. Significant part of the first chapter covers analysis of one simple word “victim”.

The following part of this paper tries to examine individual elements of the complex assistance provided to crime victims. The third chapter discusses possibilities of financial support to the victims from the government when it is impossible to obtain reparation from the offender. Many countries, including the Czech Republic, have enacted appropriate laws and have also become signatories of the European Convention on the Compensation of Victims of Violent Crimes.

The following chapter is concerned with the role of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) in the field of crime victim assistance and their cooperation with the official state authorities. I found out that the role of NGOs is plainly irreplaceable. They are able to provide psychological, legal, social as well as organizational support to the victims in general or they can be specializing in certain group of victims, for example battered children or women or victims of sexual offences.

The victim of crime also takes part in the criminal proceedings. That is why I could not avoid looking at the position of the victim in the criminal proceedings and the rights our laws guarantee to the victim. The victim can play a role of the injured party, in this case the victim is entitled to claim damages for suffered harm, or the victim can often be in the position of the witness. There is a tendency to use so called diversions more often in the criminal proceedings in order to enable the victim to play active part in the proceedings and to obtain compensation quickly and accordingly to his needs. Regarding witnesses I explored the level of protection the witness can get from the state in case of danger resulting from his participation in criminal proceedings. I also tried to

compare the Czech witness protection legislation and the American Witness Security program.

Since the topic of assistance to crime victims is discussed at the international level, the last part of my paper deals with the main international organizations and their important documents related to this matter. I pointed out three international organizations: the United Nations, the Council of Europe and the European Union. All three of them adopted imported documents setting out main rights of crime victims and inspiring member countries to adopt proper legislation and to take necessary steps to help crime victims in their difficult situation.

What I have learned during working on this thesis is that the situation concerning victims and help provided to them is not perfect. But there are steps being taken to improve position of the victims not only in the criminal proceedings but in the society in general.

I sincerely hope that my goal to present as complex view at the issue of the assistance to victims of crime as possible was fulfilled.